

THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION
A NOVELIZED HISTORY OF THE SOKA GAKKAI
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Shin'ichi Yamamoto explains why he sometimes scolds leaders: 'I am strict because I have high expectations for them.'

The conversation unfolded pleasantly as they sat around the dinner table.

“When I was harshly scolded by my boss,” said Koji Hashimoto, “I didn’t appreciate how fortunate I was. Now, looking back, I am grateful. But at the time....”

Shin’ichi Yamamoto nodded. “That’s not unusual,” he said. “At the time, you only feel suffering. But I am sure that your boss was thinking of your best interests—and even weeping inside—as he scolded you. There are times when I speak strongly to our leaders, but I am not doing it out of spite. I am strict because I have high expectations for them. Unfortunately, there are some who don’t understand that and leave the organization. And that’s a terrible shame.

“Unless others point out our faults to us, our lives can drift into negative patterns. Before we know it, we’ve grown lazy and complacent. If we are left to drift further in that direction, then, even if we have outstanding abilities, we cannot make the best use of them. Ultimately, our lives end up in failure. If we are to achieve great things in life, we need people who will point out our shortcomings when they see them and cut off our negative, destructive tendencies at the root. If this doesn’t happen when we’re young, we will never reform ourselves, no matter how many times we are told to.

“After I scold someone, I continue to think of them. In my heart I pray that they have understood my intent, that they’ll stick with me and continue to fight alongside me, that they’ll keep striving without being discouraged. Essentially there is no more wonderful thing in life, irrespective of your field of endeavor, than having such a mentor or teacher. Besides, if we aren’t scolded every once in a while, we grow lax. Every good cook knows that adding a pinch of salt makes anything sweet taste better. I wish now that Mr. Toda had scolded me much more than he did.”

To those sitting around the table, Shin’ichi’s guidance was in itself a feast; it was food and nourishment for their faith.

The next day, Shin’ichi went sightseeing around Paris with the leaders accompanying him from Tokyo and the young men from Germany. He particularly wanted the youth to have an enjoyable, memorable visit. They went to the Louvre first, because Shin’ichi wished to give these members—who spent their days working in the coal mines, covered with coal dust, and all their spare time at night tirelessly carrying out Soka Gakkai activities—a chance to experience great art.

After that, they visited the Arc de Triomphe, Montmartre and the Bois de Boulogne.

It was heartwarming to see the simple pleasure and excitement of the young men as they took in the sights and listened intently to Eiji Kawasaki’s explanations. They were like eager school children on a field trip.

Standing on the hill of Montmartre, looking out over Paris, Shin’ichi asked Kawasaki, “What do you think will happen to the Common Market now?”

That year, 1963, world attention was focused on whether the United Kingdom would join the Common Market, more formally known as the European Economic Community. The outcome was seen as having significant impact on the future direction of European

unification. The EEC had been founded in 1958 with six member nations—France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg—with the aim of economic unification. The United Kingdom, however, having access to the huge market of the Commonwealth, opposed this move, and in 1960 established the rival European Free Trade Association with six other European nations that had not joined the EEC.

While the EEC flourished, EFTA did not result in significant economic growth. In addition, a rising force for not just economic but also political unification began to make itself felt within the EEC. To ward off possible isolation from the rest of Europe, the United Kingdom applied for membership to the Common Market in August 1961, and negotiations had been under way ever since.

On Jan. 14, the day before Shin'ichi's arrival in Paris, the final negotiation session was held at the EEC Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. In negotiations up to that point, the United Kingdom's desire to protect its markets within the Commonwealth had proved a serious obstacle to membership, but most observers believed that at this session those difficulties would be surmounted, and that the United Kingdom would be admitted to the Common Market.

But that same day, President Charles de Gaulle of France held a press conference at the Élysée Palace, the presidential offices, and stated his opposition to British membership. He also rejected the United States supplying France with nuclear missiles. At the time, France had its own nuclear weapons development program, and de Gaulle's statement was an announcement that France would not follow the U.S.-led Western defense strategy.

Kawasaki replied to Shin'ichi: "With what's happened today, it may be difficult for Britain to join the Common Market at this time. De Gaulle wants to make a show of French power and independence for the benefit of Americans and the British. That's what politics is all about, it seems—shows of strength."